



Graduate School of Development Studies

***Realizing Translations:
Exploring Social Environments of Somali Bantu Refugee
Children in the United States***

A Research Paper presented by:

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of
MASTERS OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Specialisation:
**Conflict, Reconstruction, and Human Security
(CRS)**

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The Hague, The Netherlands
November, 2008

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Acknowledgments

There are several people who have guided me throughout my research. First I would like to thank Debra Beale who introduced me to the Somali Bantu community in Charlottesville. Her welcoming personality opened avenues for me to speak and interact with the Somali Bantu children. I am grateful to the Somali Bantu refugee children for speaking with me about their personal experiences without which this research would not have been possible. I extend that appreciation to the families of the children as well as the Somali Bantu community. I am grateful to my supervisor, Helen Hintjens, for her guidance, support, and encouragement; and to my second reader, Dubravka Zarkov, for keeping me focused throughout the development of this paper. Finally, I have to thank my friends and family who have been there to listen and encourage me throughout the writing process.

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List of Acronyms

BPRM:	Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration
CAL:	Center for Applied Linguistics
CO:	Cultural Orientation
EDGE:	Extended Day Generates Excellence
ESL:	English as a Second Language
GED:	General Education Development
IRC:	International Rescue Committee
LEP:	Limited English Proficiency
NCLB:	No Child Left Behind
OCASI:	Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
OPE:	Overseas Processing Entity
ORR:	Office of Refugee Resettlement
PWG:	Psychosocial Working Group
SEF:	Social-Ecological Framework
SOCA:	Soccer Organization Charlottesville-Albemarle
UNDP:	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
US:	United States
UVA:	University of Virginia
VA:	Virginia

Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between the social environments in which a Somali Bantu refugee child in resettlement in the United States interacts. By viewing these environmental elements, the resources they have, and their interaction with the refugee children I inquire about how different perceptions affect the child's ability to engage their agency to discover well-being. I term the different associations and methods used to achieve well-being by each environment 'cultural translations'.

Through unstructured interviews and participant observation I look for missing elements that inhibit the Somali Bantu refugee child from accessing and participating in activities that could affect their process of acculturation. As members of multiple environments the Somali Bantu child must mediate the cultural translations that exist into a personal understanding of how to attain well-being. Through the process I discover that the child is not the only benefactor in their developmental process. The communities within which they interact, in this case Charlottesville, VA, are in a unique position to have the opportunity to host these children. It is our cultural translation/our perception of the effects of new populations in our community that can impact the attitudes, the commitment to helping, and success of the resettlement process.

The research process guided me to the realization of children as translators for their social environments. For this research these environments are identified as school, family, community organizations, and resettlement services. Ultimately the children are also translators for themselves in their new environments, in their process of acculturation and adaptation, in discovering current and future happiness and the methods to achieve this.

The aim of this research is to open areas for further exploration into the process of resettlement for refugee children, to look for avenues that could increase feelings of security and space for access to opportunities.

Relevance to Development Studies

Conflicts continue to increase refugee populations, with the majority being children. One method to provide human security is resettlement with its euphoric promise of opportunity. Looking closer at the process and elements involved in resettlement could reveal areas for improvement. Recognizing activities that refugee children are involved in, areas where they lack access, consistency, or find themselves missing out on opportunity could encourage action. Development encourages learning from each other. It is through the combination of cultures and contextualization of relationships and understandings that refugees develop to be part of the community without being forced to assimilate.

Keywords

Children, Culture, Community, Education, Human Security, Refugees, Resettlement, Translations, United States, Well-Being

Chapter 1: The Focus of This Study

In this chapter the focus of the paper will be introduced, reasons for the research discussed, and the exploratory process explained. With these introductions made we will be ready to begin navigating through the paper to explore the research question.

The focus of this paper is Somali Bantu refugees who have spent years displaced from any land known as home. Due to continuing persecution and discrimination, they do not want to return to the country they fled. The story of their struggles and constant insecurity made them candidates for the US resettlement program in 2001. With households consisting of four to eight children under the age of 18, the experience of resettlement from their perspective is not only interesting, but also important to understand for the Somali Bantu as well as for future resettling refugees (Lehman 2003: 15).

1.1 Translating the Self

‘I have to make a shift in the innermost ways. I have to translate myself. But if I’m to achieve this without becoming assimilated—that is, absorbed—by my new world, the translation has to be careful, the turns of the psyche unforced’ (Richman 1998: 171).

Translations, although mostly thought of in terms of language, occur everyday in the way that each of us interprets a situation, text, or speech. Each person has his or her own past that frames their translation of words and situations. In the case of Elsa Hoffman, the author of the above quote, she is trying to make herself accessible and understandable to people in her resettlement home but also realizes the importance of remaining recognizable to herself. In the book *Lost in Translation* she discusses a common struggle among refugee children: how to embrace the present and look towards future while holding on to the culture of her homeland. This idea of translation of events and the self is explored in this paper.

Conflicts in the world are not decreasing and people continue to be displaced. Refugee populations are increasing also.

The definition of a refugee is a person who ‘owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country’ (USCIS, n.d.).

The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) and the international community recognize three long-term options for refugees: repatriation, local integration and resettlement in a third country.

UNHCR policies for refugee children emphasize the need for children in conflict regions to be able to access all kinds of services, including education and social support. The same policy objectives apply and can be used as guidelines for refugees in resettlement, including in the US. Resettlement’s aim is to open up opportunities for people. Education is seen as

one of the main bases for opportunity (Save the Children 2007: 4). Although education is recognized as a tool to create a sense of normalcy and stability for children, people who work in schools such as teachers and principals have reported a lack of training in specific areas such as refugee cultures and traditions, which affects their ability to best provide for what the child may need (Szente et. al. 2006: 16).

The child also exists in many social settings and environments outside of the school, in their communities. Community can be defined in several ways. The resettlement town of Charlottesville, Virginia in this paper is the larger community. Community involvement and awareness from this large definition is essential to the resettlement of refugees. Communities may have the best intentions for integrating refugees, but without an awareness and education a divide and prejudices based on observation and assumptions can occur (Barnett 2003: 9). Making a community aware of how they can help and what services the families will need in resettlement can lead to stronger community commitment (Loughry & Eyber 2003: 33).

Other specific communities include elements of the child's social environment such as the home and volunteer agencies. Somali Bantu families have their own culture and may have difficulty understanding their new life and the way their children are being raised. Resulting expectations from the local community or the community of the school may cause tension between the environments (Szente 2006: 19).

1.1.1 How Does Well-Being Translate?

This instability of a refugee's multiple displacements can affect an individual's well-being (Bash & Phillips 2006: 113). This experience is common to the Somali Bantu as many have spent their lives moving between refugee camps. Of the 12,000 that have and are being resettled in the United States 60% of them are children (Portland State University, n.d). Research says that it is important for children to embrace both worlds, however it is also important to recognize that some children may not want to remember their past due to traumatic experiences (Igoa 1995: 173). How these conflicting needs are mediated can play an important role in the well-being of the resettled refugee child.

Needs are defined as an essential part of well-being. Well-being has two basic components: the physical and the psychological (Diener & Suh 2000: 4). Elements of the two components of well-being may differ between different communities within the resettlement town. It is the process of negotiation in dealing with these differences that I call 'cultural translations'. I put focus on how the communities within the resettlement town share or differ in their idea of children's needs, the perception of the best methods to provide for these needs and how these different translations are interpreted into access to opportunities.

Recognition of the 'plurality of socializing forces in the lives of children' is important to understanding how they define their well-being, individually and in common (Ager 2005: 42). How Somali Bantu children view their well-being will differ from the way their multiple communities may interpret the same thing. The interlinking and level of compatibility between these various views will have an impact on the child's understanding and their state of well-being.

1.2 Ideas Translated into Objectives

The purpose of this research is to explore and begin to understand how refugee children mediate the environments to which they belong in resettlement in the US. Exploration of these environments and the impact that they have on a child's acculturation and adaptation into the United States is central, and hopefully will reveal the difficulties these children face. This also opens up an important discussion on how their participation enables them to overcome the obstacles that may face them. Not only is the research concerned with revealing problems and obstacles, but also it acknowledges the way some programs and the role of participants have made translations and transitions possible.

This exploratory research will hopefully create incentives for further research into the resettlement process for refugee children, and how the environments in which the child immediately interacts affects and impacts him/her and his/her development. Attention and recognition to this may suggest new methods on how to encourage opportunities and attain well-being for the children, individually and as a group.

1.3 Research Question

I recognize the difference in the way that needs are viewed by different parts of a child's social environment as well as the different cultures that each community/environment has internally, as embodied in their mission statements. Each community/environment uses different tools as catalysts for well-being. My central question is concerned with how these different perceptions are negotiated, understood and translated into opportunity by the children themselves. My research is centered on the question:

How can resettled Somali Bantu refugee children interpret the various translations of well-being that arise in their multiple environments and communities in Charlottesville?

The following supplementary questions are used to guide this research question in the context of Charlottesville:

1. How do Somali Bantu refugee children translate their needs into terms that make sense in their daily lives?
2. What programs increase the likelihood that children can attain personal goals?
3. How do social networks of Somali Bantu refugee children interpret the children's needs? (education system, school, community, family, government)
4. How can the education system as a mechanism of acculturation put the focus of programming on the children while also meeting outcome objectives?
5. What obstacles exist to Somali Bantu children participating in activities?

1.4 Gatekeepers, Bridges, Translators: Methodology

Going into this research I contacted the founder of the organization ‘Bridging the Gap’, Clayton Broga, who put me in contact with a teacher and member of the Charlottesville community, Debra, whom he thought would be able to help me find resources, give me advice and put me in contact with the resettled Somali Bantu children and their families. When I arrived in the United States I spoke with her on the phone and asked if she thought it would be possible to interact with some Somali Bantu children. Her response was that if I came to visit her, it would be impossible not to. I did not understand at the time what she meant, but contact with her changed my methodology and increased my ability to gain access to the community. Debra soon became my ‘gatekeeper’ to the Somali Bantu community.

As a teacher in the Charlottesville community, Debra was introduced to the Bantu population through two boys who came into her fifth grade classroom in 2004. Since then she has gradually become a key person for the Bantu community in Charlottesville. For example, parents go to her for advice and various needs. The children use her home as their own community centre. Debra is also still very much a part of the wider Charlottesville community, which makes her a useful person for the Somali Bantu to know. This means that she acts as a bridge between the two cultures: the refugee community and the Charlottesville population and local associations.

Debra soon became my key adult informant because of her presence and understanding in three main social settings of Bantu children in Charlottesville: school, home, and community. She became my translator into the lives of the Somali Bantu refugee children and families, giving me an alternate view to my perceptions and offering suggestions for my interview questions.

When I walked into her house, there were already five children (three boys, two girls, ages 8-13) in the house, and others continued to stream in and out. I first spoke with her about my plans and she explained how she could help. She showed me materials from the cultural orientation classes given in Kakuma that the refugees brought with them and she introduced me to Fatuma*¹, a 13 year old girl, who also became a key informant to me during my time with the Somali Bantu community in Charlottesville.

After a short car ride with Fatuma, her younger sister and Debra where I was introduced to other Somali Bantu refugees in their homes, I returned to Debra’s where I was introduced to Moses*, a 13 year old boy, who became another key informant. Fatuma and Moses have both been in Charlottesville for four years and remember parts of their past while speaking eloquently about the transitions of their resettlement and their new social setting.

These three key informants led my research by assisting me in accessing personal information, introducing me to organizations that might be of help, and being my guides and interpreters for speaking with the Bantu community in Charlottesville. The child informants helped me lead group discussions with other Somali Bantu children. The boys and girls met

¹ ‘*’ refers to where names have been changed for the protection of those who participated in this research.

in separate groups and spoke with me about school, their favorite activities, and their hopes for the future. The group discussions offered direct information, but it was through participant observation that I best viewed the culture of the various communities and how the children negotiated these. I conducted informal interviews with the young adults and adults in the community. Translation was a key issue in these interviews, as they all spoke English but with heavy accents and phrases that were unfamiliar to me.

With the field research I use the constructed theoretical framework based in the areas of human security, the social-ecological framework for psychosocial well-being, and the idea of cultural translations to organize and interpret my findings (Boothby et. al. 1995: 10). These interpretations bring to the surface common trends, shifts in thought, and help to relate the findings to some possible recommendations for these children's access to opportunities.

1.5 Looking Past 'Ooji'

The discrimination the Somali Bantu have experienced over the years has come in the form of enslavement, marginalization, and verbal abuse. The derogatory term used by the Somalis to refer to the Bantu is 'ooji,' meaning 'today' in Italian (Lehman 2003: 3). Its translation is that the Bantu are incapable of thinking into the future. This paper is precisely about how these Somali Bantu children look towards the future. Not of course ignoring the past or the culture that they hold on to and for which they have been persecuted. The ideal is for the children to be able to embrace positive aspects of their history combining these with the current settings they find themselves in so as to achieve improved well-being in future. The study explores how these children can move past 'ooji'.

In chapter one, we have introduced the focus of this research, reasons for the exploration, and began looking at why a child's multiple environments and the perceptions of needs is important to exploring the understanding of their well-being. In chapter two we will look at how the research was theoretically framed to structure the process as well as understand how the environmental elements and the child are viewed in the context of this research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Supports

Children continue to develop almost regardless of the environments in which they are raised. The reality for many Somali Bantu refugees is a plurality of communities from their country of conflict through to their resettlement communities in Charlottesville. The children are impacted by the changing situations that they become a part of from displacement through to resettlement, integration, and acculturation. The process of resettlement as a vehicle for human security is the focus in my work because it provides an understanding of children's protection needs from a broad child-centered perspective and focuses in on the importance of individual and collective experiences.

Somali Bantu refugee children need to be seen in their own individual light within their environment and thus I use a social-ecological approach to understanding these children's psychosocial well-being as mediated by the environment of Charlottesville. The environment is influenced by several different organizations, communities, and by the children's own experiences, all of which express particular ideas and internal cultures (Diener & Suh, 2000: 15). 'Childhood is diverse and assertions of universality have their limits, as different communities value different goals and skills in childhood development' (Loughry & Eyber 2003: 43).

Different perspectives and cultures are viewed by each person and each child differently-they create their own translations. Thus the third component of my theoretical framework is the unavoidable process of cultural translation. The process of negotiation and personal translation of the resources that the environment offers can provide the children who are resettled with their own way of discovering or attaining well-being.

2.1 Resettlement as a Vehicle for Human Security

The international legal definition of a refugee, the status that it creates and the three previously mentioned long-term options as defined by the UNHCR (repatriation/local integration/resettlement) all fit under the broad umbrella of human security. Resettlement is one of the three options that can act as a vehicle for providing human security of refugees. A distinction needs to be made however between human development and human security. Human development is the expansion of options and choices for people whereas human security is the vehicle that ensures people can act on their choices 'safely and freely' knowing that there is an aspect of sustainability to their actions (Lammers 1999: 46). Threats that inhibit human security as put forth by the UNDP include: threats to securities including 'economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political' (Lammers 1999: 47). All these threats have affected the Somali Bantu community of Charlottesville in the past, and some continue to affect them in the present. Human security stresses the need for contextualization through cultural and historical observations that manifest themselves in the actions and reactions to threats against a population or individual's security. The degree to which a person is threatened by insecurity will affect their attainment of well-being.

Two dominant branches of human security are currently influencing discourse and policy. Soft security describes the freedom from want-including the right to education, health, movement (migration), and economic security (Jolly 2007: 8). Hard security describes the

freedom from fear involving personal and group safety, basic human rights, law and the responsibility to protect (Jolly 2007: 8). Resettlement is a vehicle for human security in that it incorporates both this soft and hard security in the hopes of securing a potential for a sustainable and successful future.

‘Human Security can be applied as a dynamic concept which allows for the study of how past, present and future are tied together in people’s perception of (in) security and in the strategies they develop and employ to cope with actual instances of insecurity’ (Lammers 1999: 63).

With recognition of the past and human security’s focus on the future it is a discourse that recognizes that resettlement in itself will not solve all the problems that these refugees have. This discourse emphasizes stability and sustainability and for this reason is applicable to these Somali Bantus in transition (Gasper 2007). The emphasis on subjective experience and differing emotions puts the focus on the individual, albeit in a group setting. For this paper the focus on the individual Somali Bantu child in this resettlement experience makes sense given the central role of human security, both hard and soft. The group of Somali Bantu children is also important however, given the centrality of the social ecology approach, discussed in the next section. Human security components are thus combined with the social-ecological approach to psychosocial well-being to produce a framework in which the individual child is always part of several communities, including the community of peers, the family, the school and the wider environment of Charlottesville.

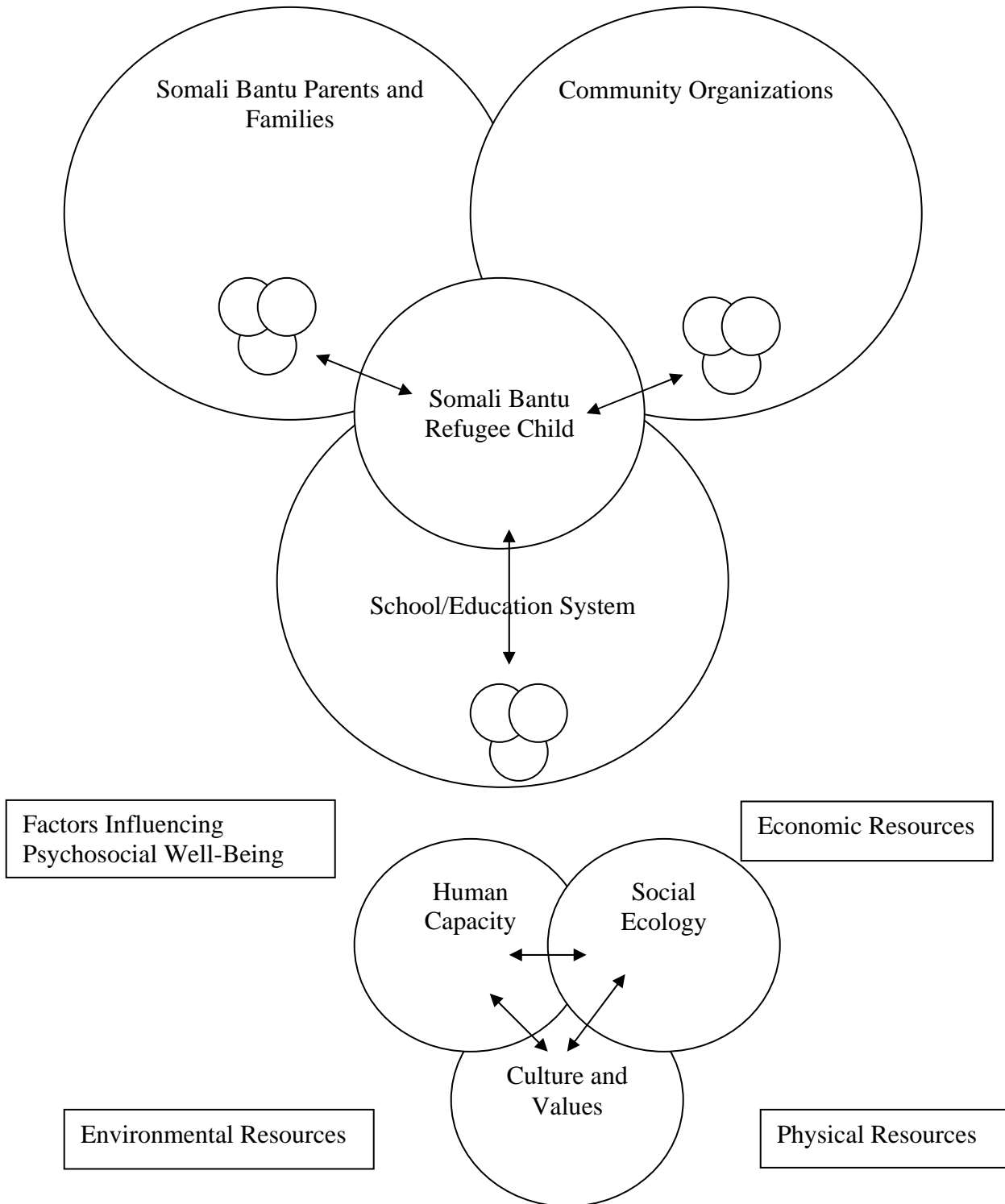
2.2 The Social Ecological Framework for Psychosocial Well-Being

While researching ways to view my findings both theoretical and practical I discovered the Psychosocial Working Group’s (PWG) framework for psychosocial well-being. It was helpful in viewing the Somali Bantu refugee children’s resettlement because of its focus on resources rather than deficits (Boothby et. al. 2006: 9). Throughout my research it remained useful for framing and placing findings into categories and thus I found myself using this as more of an organizational tool than a tool for analysis.

The organization model encourages viewing the resettlement community, in this case Charlottesville, as it exists and addressing the challenges that it will face with this new population as well as challenges that this new population might have within their new community. The three main components to the social ecological approach are social ecology, human capacity, and culture and values. The factors or resources that affect these identified areas are economic, environmental, and physical (Boothby et. al. 2006: 10). The way that these components act on, towards, or against each other can affect the adjustment of a refugee child.

The social-ecological framework (SEF) places the child at the center of its environment (see figure 1). It defines the child as the agent of his or her actions. Although their needs are mediated, the child is an individual within the social world. This approach recognizes that it is the children who ultimately find their place, identity, and method to achieve well-being.

Figure 1: Social Environments of the Somali Bantu Refugee Child in Resettlement. Each environmental element contains its own combination of factors that influence the psychosocial well-being of the child. (Boothby et. al. 1995: 10).



The area of human capacity describes the ability of a person to contribute or access opportunity in a community (Boothby et. al. 2006: 9). It is the environment in which the child is developing and the communities which influence them that can affect their overall capacity. Involvement in activities can help facilitate feelings of inclusion and increase positive connections as well as establish mental and physical health and well-being (OCASI 2005: 5). Psychosocial well-being involves a ‘sense of safety, a sense of self, and an adjustment to the cultural expectations of a new country while maintaining a connection to their heritage’ (McBrien 2005: 339). This is a type of translation of the self to fit both personal histories and present realities in their social ecology.

Social ecology includes social interactions both within the family and across established organizations and institutions including peer, religion, political, and civic (Boothby et. al. 2006: 9). For this research the key communities are interpreted as being family, school, and community. When the standards and structures of community and organizations are disrupted it can affect the way that networks of communication, learning, development, and education occur. Somali Bantu networks have been in a constant state of disruption, thus the multiple environments may affect the way that the child develops and realizes their full human capacity (Boothby et. al. 2006: 12). These multiple environments have multiple translations that affect a child’s understanding of well-being.

The SEF stresses social contextualization. Each community that accepts refugees will have a different experience and a different method and idea of well-being. Each refugee population being resettled will also have their own methods of achieving and visions for how to attain well-being and adapt to their new settings. Viewing Charlottesville as a microcosm of larger resettlement towns for the Somali Bantu such as Atlanta and Chicago, allows for the interaction between the separate social environments to be viewed at a closer level.

Culture and values can be seen as a bridge between the past and the present. For refugee children this involves the fusion of cultural values from the multiple displacements and the interpretation of needs in their ‘new home’. It includes the reestablishment of social connections and translates the value and meaning given to behavior and experience. Establishing social connections can help develop areas for economic gain such as careers, community, and educational opportunities that can also increase a sense of security (Kostelny 2006: 29).

2.3 Cultural Translations

‘It is local communities, using their cultural resources and supports, that are central to psychosocial well-being’ (Kostelny 2005: 31). Just as translators for text or spoken language act as a means of understanding across borders of language, cultural translators look for bridges that narrow the gap and allow for an understanding across people, cultures and beliefs. This is why understanding the different cultural translations of needs will affect how children view and act in their surroundings.

The experiences that children have before resettling can include traumatic events. There may also be psychological issues that exist that parents are not always aware of due to differences in cultural understandings between children and adults in the same families. Community

support can help refugee children receive the care or help that they need to be successful in their new home, but in doing so should be made aware of the ‘complexity of their situation and of the adaptations they must make’ (Richman 2000: 179).

Parental involvement in the child’s life is also important. There is a fear that differences in cultural activities and lack of past experience as parents of children in a formal school system, may lead Somali Bantu parents to be less involved than American parents. If this is so, there is a fear that the role of parents may be to increase cultural dissonance rather than reduce it (McBrien 2005: 344). A type of inter-generational clash of cultures can occur when children are acquiring the cultural knowledge and practices of American society (McBrien 2005: 346).

‘Well-being, even for individualists, requires interdependence among people who tacitly agree to approve of and support each other in particular ways that have been shaped by culture and history’ (Kitayama & Markus 2000: 115). Culture can be seen as a mediating factor in the decisions and actions that people take in their lives. This is why looking at the culture of environments/organizations acting on refugee children is important for understanding the hidden pressures or agendas that may be influencing their actions and thus their well-being (Suh 2000: 63).

2.4 Theoretical Contextualization

These three components of my theoretical framework will guide my findings. Having been a part of the university community in Charlottesville, I have participated in university student-run programs including coaching a SOCA soccer team. This has influenced the way I understand the larger community, the social networks within it, and the condition of my interaction within Charlottesville. I have also worked in the US public school system with ‘character education’ under a nationally funded project through Americorps, a domestic volunteer service, to help at-risk youth understand healthy options and future opportunities. With these programs I have seen the education system struggle with legislation such as No Child Left Behind. I have seen racism, discrimination, and prejudice amongst peers only perpetuated by the teacher’s inaction. Just as different environments and cultures act on the child, I too have my own link of environments that influence how I interpret and construct the following research.

Chapter 3: Contextualization

In order to formulate questions and explore what the Somali Bantu children experience in resettlement it was important to first understand something of their history and the history of their relatives and ancestors. It is also important to understand the hosting community of Charlottesville. Exploring the background is part of viewing the current situations and individual circumstances in their wider context. Proper contextualization allows the social sciences researcher to explore the situation of refugee children from several angles. This chapter provides some contextualization of the background to the well-being of Somali Bantu refugee children now in resettlement in Charlottesville.

3.1 Enslavement, Persecution, and Discrimination: The Somali Bantu History

‘Going back to Somalia would be to plunge back into the flames. Going to America is a dream. It is the choice between the fire and paradise’ (UNHCR 2002: 18).

The Somali Bantu history begins back in the seventh century with the coupling events of the Arab and Persian traders settling along the east coast of Africa and the death of Muhammad, which initiated the surge of refugees seeking to separate from the conflict in Arabia (Lehman 2003: 6). The co-existence of the Arabs with the Bantu-speaking Africans created a new identity: that of the Swahili people and language. The Swahili spread their network through Africa-inland and to the south, which included the Somali Bantu tribes.

In 1730 the Sultanate of Oman came to power and expanded slavery throughout Africa. Industrialization was on the rise and with this development brought the demand for cheap labor in the form of slavery (Lehman 2003: 7). Tanzania was a popular place for enslavement, which is why so many of the Somali Bantu’s who were accepted for resettlement to the United States trace their origins here (Center for Applied Linguistics, n.d.). 25,000-50,000 slaves lived in the Somali riverine areas from 1800-1890 (Lehman 2003: 8).

The Somali Bantu can be divided into groups developed from the location of their settlement along the Juba River Valley. Those who settled in the Lower Juba River valley retained their culture and native languages. The group that lived in the Shabelle River valley integrated into the Somali society so when they settled in the Middle Juba River valley they often no longer had their native language or culture (Center for Applied Linguistics, n.d.). Many chose to adopt dominant Somali clan attachment in order to receive protection. The group that retained their ancestral culture and language faced the largest persecution and discrimination and for that reason was resettled in the United States.

In 1960, Somalia gained its independence and an increase in clan identity dominated the Somali political and social landscape. The Somali Bantu were excluded from political, economic and educational opportunities (Lehman 2003: 10). The Bantu who did not identify with a Somali clan were approved for resettlement due to lack of protection and constant threat.

From the 1970s-1980s, the Somali government, led by Siyad Barre and his military regime, enlisted Bantu into the military to fight against Ethiopia. The civil war in 1991 increased the discrimination against the Bantu as they were excluded from protective clan ties. They were marked as targets because of their agricultural richness, which made them victims of thievery, rape and murder (Center for Applied Linguistics, n.d.).

The Somali Bantu headed towards refugee camps inside Kenya in October of 1992. By January of 1994 there was an estimated 10,000 Bantu living in Dagahaley, Ifo, Liboi, and Haadera refugee camps (Lehman 2003: 11). '75% wanted to resettle in Tanzania and not return to Somalia. Several thousand refugees also fled Somalia directly by sea to Marafa refugee camp near Malindi, Kenya and also to the Mkuyu refugee camp near Handeni in northern Tanzania' (Lehman 2003: 10).

The Bantu's historical identity as slaves remained in tact inside the refugee camps, where they lived on the edge and experienced the most crimes and attacks (UNHCR 2002: 18). Women were at an increased vulnerability to rape while doing daily chores. This act was committed by men of one Bantu clan against those of another (UNHCR 2002: 18). This inter-clan dislike caused many conflicts.

In 2002, the US Immigration and Naturalization Service moved over 12,000 Somali Bantus to Kakuma refugee camp where they were interviewed for possible resettlement to the United States (Chanoff 2002: 8). As of March 2008, 13, 387 Somali Bantu had been resettled in the United States with the greatest number, 7978, being resettled in 2004 (Gauger, Kelly, personal communication, 25 April 2008).

The discrimination and methods of exclusion from their past continue to affect them in resettlement. The exclusion from formal education has resulted in about only five percent who have had the experience of formal education and a 24% literacy rate among the population due to classes given by other Somali Bantus and the IRC. (Lehman, 2001: 21). The differences in gender and education are important to note. Of the Bantu children who received education, most were male because of the traditional female responsibilities at home. This lack of education and high levels of illiteracy play an important role in understanding difficulties in resettlement.

3.2 Seeking Security: The Process of Resettlement

'The number of Somali Bantu assigned to a particular location depended on that community's capacity to serve them well' (Lutheran Services of Georgia, n.d.).

Many Somali Bantu made their way to the Dadaab refugee camp seeking safety from their insecure lives. Within that camp they received protection from UNHCR after being qualified as refugees through interviews at Kakuma in 2002 (Chanoff 2002:8). Interviews are made during the resettlement process to look for valid reasons for a refugee's resettlement. Qualifications for resettlement in the US include 'histories of persecution, being a member of a minority group that can be categorized as a group with 'special humanitarian concern', or if the person is a spouse, an unmarried child, or parent of a refugee who has been

resettled in the United States' (RefugeeCouncilUSA, n.d.). The Somali Bantu refugees could qualify for resettlement on the basis of each of these specifications.

Following approval, the Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) looks for more information about the applicant and their family members in order to find the best location in the US for resettlement. Information taken into consideration include job skills, special needs, and location of any relative that might already be in the US. The Bantu practice polygamy, but before being approved for resettlement the male 'would have to choose one wife and 'divorce' the others' (Lutheran Services of Georgia, n.d.). This is an introduction to American law and culture.

The refugees are also given lessons referred to as cultural orientation (CO) to introduce and familiarize them with what they should expect to see and do in the United States. This orientation also acted as an outlet for counseling to allow refugees to express their concerns and discuss expectations. Under normal circumstances 15 hours is allotted for refugees. However, in the case of the Somali Bantu 80 hours were given to anyone over the age of 15 (Morland 2003: 2).

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) created literacy classes for the refugees in the camps. The Bantu were divided according to their abilities and those that were literate were also enlisted to help teach. The Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM) also asked the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) to help coordinate a bridge of information from overseas to the US. This idea was to allow the resettlement communities to learn more about incoming populations.

Recognition that the Somali Bantu refugees were a group different from any that had previously been resettled in the US and the fact that it is the largest African group to come at one time, the BPRM introduced the Cultural Orientation Resource Center and encouraged increased coordination between the organizations involved in the resettlement. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) provided monetary assistance for the Somali Bantu Project. The Somali Bantu Project is an online website which compiles information about the population and provides resources that give advice to local communities and service providers (Portland State University, n.d.).

Once in the United States, a voluntary agency is assigned to assist in the resettlement and is the main source of information for the refugee. This includes an introduction at the airport, basic housing, community orientation, and helping the refugee construct his/her own resettlement plan (International Rescue Committee, n.d.). There are ten voluntary agencies appointed by the US government (Office of Refugee Resettlement, n.d.a)¹. The IRC is the agency appointed to this resettlement community.

The resettlement community for this population is Charlottesville, VA. Charlottesville is host to many nationalities, it being home to the University of Virginia. This diverse institution would seem to boast an open and accepting atmosphere, but what lies beyond university grounds is different than what is described to incoming students of Charlottesville. Poverty levels are high with 26 percent of the population below the poverty line (Epodunk, 2000). This percentage is not representative of the entire population. The very wealthy,

including celebrities, live in the hills of this historical city. Diversity is existent on many levels-economic, political, social, and educational. There is an awareness of the hidden problems of poverty, broken homes, and crime to those that choose to look. This is where bridges are built to connect the divide through volunteer programs and organizations. The university may be one reason why populations are resettled in Charlottesville-an abundance of students to volunteer with children, a community used to transient populations, and a university full of jobs. Although on the exterior these positives bring reason to the resettlement of these refugees in Charlottesville, the aspect of them being part of a population hidden to outsiders brings complexities to the picture regarding discrimination, prejudice, and isolation.

3.3 Translations of the Education System

‘When I get a refugee child and I have no background information on him or her I often feel overwhelmed. I want to help the child, but I do not know what he/she had been through. I believe I should be provided with as much information as possible’ (Szente 2006: 16).

The Bantu do not work with the twelve-month calendar and refer to birthday by the season and crop that was present at the time. Immigration services assign a date (January 1), and age based on size of the child and information given (Chanoff 2002: 4). This age is a determinant in the grade level that refugees enter in the education system.

Recognizing the school as a factor acting on the child is important because ‘education is particularly vital for refugee children [due to] its role in social integration, language development and access to services and employment’ (Richman 1998: 176). School is at the crossroads for a child’s development of identity and self. The student’s guidance and support from the staff and surrounding peers is a factor in the integration of the child (Igoa 1995: 104).

Education is a fundamental human right and one that is recognized as part of soft human security. The education system can provide a stable setting for refugee children in resettlement. It is the location where children spend the majority of their time, interact with the world outside of their family and it is an essential place where they are forced to deal with their past as well as incorporate their present and learn to plan for their future (McBrien 2005: 330). Teachers are main components of this social system as they are responsible for the environment of the classroom and the interactions that occur within it. If teachers are not properly trained to receive and facilitate refugees it can hinder a child’s development within their new setting (McBrien 2005: 332).

Education policies are a focus of international agencies such as Save the Children, UNICEF and UNHCR. These policies address education for children in conflict zones. However, there is also legislation such as the Geneva Convention-Article 22 that requires states to provide equal schooling opportunities to refugee children. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which the US is a signatory, calls for research on helping refugee students succeed (McBrien 2005: 356)ⁱⁱ. There is also national legislation such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), introduced in 2002 in the United States which calls

for improvement across all categories for students (US Department of Education, 2001), to 'build the mind and character of every child, from every background in every part of America' (Bush, n.d.).

Being the most recent legislation pertaining to education, the NCLB Act is relevant in the resettlement and adaptation of refugees in the US. This Act was created with the idea of making teachers more accountable and students more aware of their goals (U.S Department of Education, 2001). The Act calls for assessment tests of all students at certain ages and grades. The state is allowed to choose its own standards-based on the 10th amendment. The problem is that these standards have tended to focus teachers on teaching for the standardized test rather than using creative methods to reach different needs of students in the classroom. Although on the surface NCLB appears to be a policy with great ideas and potential, teachers have criticized that it has forced schools and by association teachers to focus their work on meeting certain pre-specified standards ('Teachers Speak Out', 2007).

NCLB does not have guidelines for minority children and there are only 'two requirements for teachers of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students which is to a) teach English, and b) teach the state content standards' (McBrien 2005: 356). This can lead to the rush of acquiring English. Feelings of inadequacy when the student is feeling that he/she is not learning fast enough can affect the student's well-being (Sheriff 1995:18). It is up to the individual teacher to decide how they are going to approach these children. The Act gives a three year window for those who do not speak English to take the test in their own language. For the Somali Bantu this is not an option because there are several dialects of Maimai and it is not a written language (Lehman 2003: 20).

A program called English as a Second Language (ESL) is the main avenue through which refugee children become part of the education system. The acquiring of language is the first step towards being able to communicate within classes and with other students. The way in which ESL is taught is an important factor in understanding how refugee children start to understand lessons. Funding can be a determinant factor in this.

There are some restrictions on how funding can be used, which can affect flexibility within the classroom. The ORR provides funds through grants under the Refugee Children School Impact Program to allow schools some flexibility in the budget to help children integrate into the system. The catch is that these funds cannot be used in supplemental form with other federal funding (Office of Refugee Resettlement, n.d.b). Reviewing the availability of resources could reveal reasons why schools have certain focus areas that are translated into specific programs.

The use of grant funds for more multicultural education could diminish the amount of misunderstanding between cultures. How a teacher handles a multicultural setting can affect the way 'mainstream' and other students interact between cultures (Loughry & Eyber 2003: 80). In situations where teachers have some resistance towards a particular student it can increase the tendency towards discrimination from peers and classmates (McBrien 2005: 356). This discrimination can have lasting effects such as 'low self perceptions, difficult social interactions, decreased motivation, and low achievement' (McBrien 2005: 330). Allocating funds towards training for teachers on how to introduce refugees to their classrooms could diminish such misunderstandings.

Attitudes affect and define discourses by which people act on and within. If separate cultures are viewed as something that needs to be 'fixed' and assimilation is seen as the ultimate goal this could have negative effects on the child (McBrien 2005: 331). Attention to practices that can be seen as marginalizing such as segregation in lunch rooms, and after-school activities that children cannot participate in because of the lack of transportation, access, or funds needs to be recognized.

Somali Bantu refugees who are nervous about using their English skills in the classroom may have feelings of isolation, loneliness and inadequacy that can further decrease participation in the classroom and the community. Schools often look towards local community and volunteer organizations for help both in classrooms and with special activities. These activities have the possibility of increasing the child's participation and feeling of comfort/safety in the classroom (Keating & Ellis 2007: 30).

3.4 'Building Bridges': Community Organizations

'In countries around the world, sport, recreation, and play are improving health-both mind and body. They are teaching important life lessons about respect, leadership, and cooperation. They are promoting equality for all and bridging divides between people' (OCASI, 2005: 2).

Support from community organizations that recognize and understand the Bantu's specific culture and history can have a great impact on students by providing outlets for expression of one's native culture. Religious and community groups play a role in offering support and resources for activities (Szente et. al. 2006: 18). Activities such as drama, music and art have the potential to foster an environment of appreciation for and understanding of different cultures.

The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) recognized the importance of recreation and sport in their report presented in 2005. The US and Canada share many cultural traits as well as host similar refugee populations. For this reason, their model and findings are useful for looking at the Somali Bantu refugees in the US and their participation in sports and recreational activities. The Council identifies seven reasons for participating in sport and recreation, which include: 'identification with peer group, cognitive development, social development, physical development/personal health, emotional development, moral development and community connectedness, and economic health' (OCASI 2005: 5). Confidence from these activities can create leadership skills as well as introduce the child to important American values such as citizenship, one of the pillars of American character education (Josephson Institute, n.d.).

Community organizations generally offer an inviting setting and a safe environment. Many programs for children deal with prevention and development. These community organizations and programs can play a large part in the acculturation of refugee children through interaction with their American peers as well as older role models. Supplemental support in the classroom can also be an outcome of these programs. National programs such as Americorps have programs set up around the country that provide this type of service (Americorps, n.d.).

Sports and other extracurricular and recreation activities have been used to increase feelings of inclusion for asylum seekers and refugees in many communities (Amara et. al. 2004: 4). In the United States one of the more commonly reported sports among refugee children is soccer—a sport that transcends borders. It is played in local communities in Somalia, in the Kakuma refugee camp, and is also offered in host communities in resettlement.

Benefits of sport and recreation according to OCASI's finding are:

'the ability for it to provide networking opportunities for future personal and professional relationships for immigrant and refugee youth, the opportunity for the advancement in acquisition of language skills, a safe place for children with parents who work, the encouragement of creative thinking and action, facilitation of tolerance and interpersonal skills, a feeling of competitiveness in a world where in other fields they may feel beaten, construction of a community spirit, and ultimately helps children overcome some of the trauma that they may be experiencing from their past and their resettlement and immigration processing' (OCASI 2005: 18).

Although OCASI's focus is on sport, other recreational activities such as the arts also provide outlets to achieve these objectives.

The emphasis of these sorts of activities can be beneficial when the interactions are not based in ideas of assimilation but rather as sources for acculturation (OCASI 2005: 14). Recreation activities can offer the opportunity for children to show competence. This is especially important for refugee children who are struggling in school because of language and cultural barriers. This competency and participation can lead to greater self-esteem (OCASI 2005: 6).

There are problems and challenges faced by the refugee youth that involve feelings of inadequacy from not having appropriate attire, inability to reach a place, fear of going alone to events, cultural and religious barriers, misunderstanding or lack of knowledge of some of the activities (OCASI 2005: 19). An understanding between the youth's fears and the challenges faced by the service providers should be addressed. Bridging this with capabilities and willingness of parents and other community organizations can effect participation and feelings of safety and comfort with the program.

There are barriers that may exist that prevent refugees from participating in formalized activities. One barrier is the lack of parental support due to their own struggle to adjust to a new culture, language, and systems in which they must act. Due to these restraints, extracurricular activities may not be high on the list of priorities for parents. Time restraints, transportation, and costs are also an issue. This is where community organized and funded programs may prove beneficial. Funding through grants and fundraising is an option that should be considered (Keogh 2002: 5).

3.5 Contextualization Creates a Multi-Dimensional View

Contextualization of situations fosters a better understanding of the circumstances that this Somali Bantu refugee population and the children within it experience in resettlement.

Multi-dimensional views allow for better awareness of what can impact successful resettlement. What makes children happy and what circumstances have encouraged these feelings are important to research as mobilizers for the self-development of well-being. Research has found that the types of activities that people are involved in, the reasons for being involved, and the progress towards goals play an important role in determining well-being (Oishi 2000: 88). This is why looking at what activities outside of school that children are involved in is important to understanding how they interpret and translate their well-being.

This chapter contextualized the process of discovering the environmental elements that I focus on in my field research. The information and knowledge gained from this process helped to develop the questions that I asked the Somali Bantu. My preliminary research also exposed ideas and angles that could be explored further. Chapter four is the result of my communication and interaction with the Somali Bantu refugee population in Charlottesville.

Chapter 4: Translations Through Stories

Research was conducted in the months of July and August 2008 in the town of Charlottesville, VA, USA. Participant observations and unstructured interviews were conducted with four parents, two teachers, 25 school-age children (aged 7-18), and ten young adults (18-26) in person. The teachers and the parents were interviewed separately, but the children were interviewed in groups². Participant observation occurred within the home of my key informant, Debra and in the home of one Bantu family in the community. Information that could not be retrieved through personal interview was attained through email communication. This combination makes up the following research findings.

4.1 Teachers as Students

The Charlottesville City School system is set up in four stages. The first stage, elementary school consists of grades kindergarten through fourth grade (ages 5-9), the second is upper elementary (grades 5-6, ages 10-11), middle school (grades 7-8, ages 12-13), and high school (9-12, ages 14-18). All students in the city of Charlottesville attend the same upper elementary, Walker Upper Elementary, and middle school, Buford. The age-out limit for children in the city schools is twenty-one.

4.1.1 *Learning to Teach*

'I still remember that day in 2004 when two Somali Bantu boys walk into my 5th grade classroom. It was Moses and Ali*. I had never met anyone who had just come from Africa before. I grew up in Charlottesville. I live across the street from where I grew up. This was a whole new experience for me. I was not told that they would be coming in. I was given no training, instruction or extra help in the classroom. I had 19 other students that year' (Beale, Debra, personal interview, 28 July 2008)³.

As a teacher in 2004, Debra did not know it at the time but she would become an influential and necessary resource for the Somali Bantu community. Debra was also an invaluable resource to me during this research because of her connection and understanding of the Somali Bantu refugee community. Her connection and understanding come from the extra time she took independently to research and personally speak with family members and children.

Debra used CAL, the online resource, for her research. This site is recommended by the Department of State for advice and information about incoming refugee populations. The Somali Bantu Project website, which is where I first became interested in this population, is a compilation of research and information, also frequently connects to this CAL website. Debra also recommended this site for my research. Due to the lack of time or warning, teachers who teach incoming populations do not have time to discuss methods that could make the transition into the classroom and the formal education program easier for the

² See Appendix 1 for a sample of the unstructured interview questions.

³ Quotes set apart, unless specified, in this chapter and chapter five, are not the exact words of the speakers as no recordings were taken during the interviews.

children. Debra however felt that if they were given time, teachers were eagerly looking for advice and additional information that could help them be better teachers for the children.

4.1.2 Is the School Prepared?

This school year (2008-2009) is the first year that the city will have an ESL coordinator that helps place children into their proper grade and classroom. This involves an abilities test prior to placement whereas it has been placement before testing. Programs for students who are learning English as a second language are classified as 'push-out' and 'push-in' programs. 'Push-in' programs consist of putting the child directly in the classroom, usually with an assistant to facilitate understanding. 'Push-out' programs involve time reserved each day for students to go to a separate classroom for individual attention with specific problems he/she might be having. Due to lack of resources, the students in Charlottesville are in mostly 'push-in' programs but there is not an aid in the room to help with understanding. This has led some children to sit in the back of the classroom, forced into disengagement because of their lack of abilities to communicate and participate in activities.

A notable issue is the placement of children with learning disabilities. The pressure of placing children into the system by age coupled with a lack of English skills makes proper analysis of educational ability difficult. Identifying students with learning disabilities or mental handicaps becomes even harder. Debra said that she only recognized that there was a problem with Ali because of the contrast in learning between him and Moses. However, it took a year to be able to put him in a special program. This was due to problems in communication between him, the teacher, the parents, and the school.

Perceptions of how to define children with special needs are also a cross-cultural issue. For example, Tal* is a 26-year-old boy who lives with his parents. His family refers to him as 'crazy'. This is not an acceptable diagnosis in the United States. The selection of terms used by populations sends out different signals to community members and to the child him/herself about their abilities or disabilities.

4.1.3 Celebrating Diversity?

There appears to be few outlets for multicultural education within the school. In group discussions, some of the students said that they were only asked about where they were from in social studies classes (classes that explore history and current events). Reasons for lack of questioning could have to do with misunderstandings of what is appropriate to ask the children, but themes such as refugees and cultures could be explored further within the system.

After-school activities are provided by the upper-elementary school through a program called EDGE (Extended Day Generates Excellence). It is set up for one-two hours after school. The children can sign up for activities that they want to participate in. The programs offered are a variety of arts, culture, technology, sports, and musicⁱⁱⁱ (Walker Upper Elementary, n.d.). It would be a great place to expand and highlight the cultural diversity of the school and its students however there is no program offered for this purpose.

4.1.4 *Translating Policies into Opportunities*

The education system is driven by its own needs in order to provide the needs for the children. Focus is on children doing well on the standardized tests because scores effect funding, reputation, and statistics of success for the school. For this reason the school's main goal for the child is to learn and understand English. The ESL program is the main source for this type of education and instruction.

The education system in the United States is both locally and federally funded and evaluated. The NCLB Act was created to ensure that schools are performing at the high level necessary to prepare students for their future. Just as the local/public schools are held accountable to standards the government assigns, equally the government should be held accountable to promised funding. Funding could be used to make the local school and community aware of new populations resettling in their town not only to better prepare the teachers, but also the school children.

The education system should take the initiative of introducing multicultural curriculum. The NCLB Act outlines its support for 'character education', which describes the possibility for 'additional funds [to] be provided for character education grants to states and districts to train teachers in methods of incorporating character-building lessons and activities into the classrooms' (Bush n.d.). In a city such as Charlottesville where many different populations make up the fabric of the community this is essential. The school is the main arena for learning as a child-both basic academic skills as well as social and life skills. Teachers have the responsibility to help children understand the world that is around them.

4.2 **The International Rescue Committee**

'IRC resettles small numbers of many ethnicities, including the 2004 resettlement of Somali Bantu, and we develop enrichment activities for all refugee children as they arrive. We have assisted most families to enroll their children in mainstream programs such as soccer, summer school, ESL camps and orchestra....In addition, more than half of the Bantu families resettled in Charlottesville have out-migrated to other states' (Donovan, Susan, personal communication, 6 July 2008)⁴.

The IRC is the voluntary resettlement agency in partnership with the federal government in Charlottesville. They help primarily in the first steps of resettlement, which include school registration, finding a house for the family, and signing children up for community programs like SOCA, Soccer Organization Charlottesville-Albemarle, the local community soccer organization. Unfortunately, the initial four-month start-up does not have lasting potential. For example, with SOCA, the IRC does not have a program to assist in providing transportation to practice or the games, which leaves the child unable to access this opportunity.

My information on the IRC was attained through email and through their website specifically because it was difficult to get in touch with them. The response I received seemed to be as

⁴ Direct quote from email communication.

impersonal as the interaction described by members of the Somali Bantu community. No advice was given or general organizations recommended to me. At the end I was cut off with little room to approach with further questions. I did follow up with inquiries-including a possible visit-but received no response.

My experience seemed consistent to that told by the Somali Bantu themselves. An organization that is there to be resourceful and to provide information seems unwilling to foster a relationship.

4.2.1 Creating Barriers: Walls That Hinder Communication

Past the basic services that the IRC provides such as finding housing, the IRC tells the refugees they can call them if they need help, but the Somali Bantu's say that they get the impression that they do not actually want to be contacted. Another issue is the four-month limit on start-up help. For example if the refugees arrive in the summer, and their pilot light for their heater does not work in the winter, they will not know what to do. Being available to teach these basic skills to families past four months should be part of the IRC's job.

There does not appear to be a connection with the IRC and education system past basic registration for the children. This lack of coordination of information between the two agencies, including medical records (which are not available for privacy reasons) may affect the child's ability to succeed in school. With the extra knowledge of certain notes in mental abilities, the school could be more equipped to help incoming students benefit from the school and their services.

The IRC has an interpreter, but at \$80 an hour an unrealistic option for the refugees. Some refugees have asked to volunteer as interpreters for the IRC but have been turned down. There appears to be a type of miscommunication or lack of communication between the resettling refugees and the IRC. This could be due to different understandings of the needs and wants, or maybe language differences. However, this gap has caused the IRC to be perceived by the refugee community, and those that do work with them as unfriendly. They do not seem to be living up to their potential and as a direct arm of the ORR is disappointing. Susan mentioned that half of the Bantu had transferred out of Charlottesville, and I speculate that this could be due to feelings of separation from the community and lack of support.

4.2.2 How Can the IRC Lower Walls?

The IRC's in a unique position at the crossroads of the environments being explored in this research. They should be able to see where the community, the schools, and the parents can interact. The IRC needs to look beyond the requirements and into sustainable programming that introduces and includes members of the community. If they as a branch are unable to provide services that the refugees need, a program that offers advice to others who want to set up organizations, or take in volunteers should be available. The IRC needs to better coordinate and communicate both vertically and laterally within the community and with the federal government.

4.3 Charlottesville: A Community Strengthened by Diversity?

There are several community organizations in Charlottesville, but I will only discuss those that were brought up to me specifically through interviews and discussion with the children and parents. Involvement in activities that community organizations offer can increase a child's ability to communicate and participate. The students that I interacted with became excited for any opportunity or activity that they could participate in.

4.3.1 *A University of Volunteers*

The Charlottesville community has many programs for under-privileged and low-income families. Many are run or started by university students. Charlottesville is home to the University of Virginia (UVA). This community's greatest population is that of the 13,353 undergraduate students and the 7,014 graduate and professional students (University of Virginia, n.d.). It is a university that fosters the development of volunteer organizations and non-profits such as 'Bridging the Gap'.

'Bridging the Gap works to bring happiness to the children's lives while helping them acquire the tools essential for obtaining America's unmatched opportunities' (Clayton Broga *in* Bromely, 2008).

The mission stated by the founder of this non-profit organization 'Bridging the Gap' is similar to many university founded programs that recognize the need for supplemental support to community members by community members. The organization volunteers in several areas where refugees need extra help including after school tutoring, coaching, transportation, and mentoring.

A benefit of a university community is the diversity of skills and passions that young adults are eager to share. For example, university film students lent their expertise to Charlottesville High School by helping the students create a book and a video documenting immigrant and refugee lives and experiences. This was done through personal interviews as well as performances. The final performance, which highlighted cultural talents such as dancing and singing, brought the community together. This is the awareness and appreciation that can be gained from listening. The interviews that were on the tape and in the book revealed a number of refugees representing many different places in the world and told of stories both good and bad about their experience before and after settling in Charlottesville. This extra effort by the university students added an element of multicultural learning to the high school. The younger children said that they also wanted to participate in this and gathered around the television while I watched the video. They copied dances and explained to me what was happening.

The problem with student-run programs is the lack of consistency due to school breaks, exams, and other commitments. Mentor programs are important and have proved beneficial for children, but when the mentor is unreliable it can cause problems for a child who is depending on them.

4.3.2 *Communities with Similar Needs*

‘The program uses computers as a catalyst for youth to challenge themselves, become engaged in their own learning, and realize greater possibilities academically, professionally, and for their community’ (Computers 4 Kids, n.d.).

The preceding mission is for the program ‘Computers 4 Kids’, however the elements of a challenging experience, learning, and mentorship are shared by several organizations.

‘Computers 4 Kids’ is focused on populations that have the same financial difficulties as the Somali Bantu. All of the Somali Bantu children aged 12–18 were part of this program or had been through the program. This age group consists of middle and high school students, the age where they will need to start using the computer for assignments and for college and scholarship applications. It is funded by donations from residents in Charlottesville and by separate organizations that want to contribute to the cause. Students who are eligible for this, which all of the Somali Bantu children are, must complete a project with a mentor and once completed they receive a free computer and Internet for a year (Computers 4 Kids, n.d.).

This program offers the opportunity for the refugee child to engage and learn. The work helps them understand and connect with activities that they may want to be involved in later. With the mentor, the children develop their own educational plan. They must make a commitment of one hour a month for nine months. As computers are now an essential element for daily life in the United States, being able to use, understand, teach, and learn on one is a step towards the future including further education, opportunities and information for the students. This program is a great source of acculturation because of the mentor relationship as well as an understanding of formal and modern technology.

SOCA is focused on the youth population in Charlottesville. This local soccer organization brings a diversity of people together. The program separates the children by age groups and skill level. The older children are involved in traveling and coaching. This encouragement for leadership roles can increase a child’s participation within the community. Based in core values of ‘enjoyment, player development, inclusiveness, citizenship, service, and professionalism’ SOCA has the potential to provide a space for these refugees to interact and communicate on a level playing field (SOCA, n.d). This was one common activity that was shared among all the children that I spoke with—girls and boys. It is also an organization that brings together parts of the community: parents, children, teachers, coaches, and university students.

Activities are great opportunities for children, but they require extra effort from the community. Charlottesville seems to be missing community members such as Debra, non-university students, who give their time to speak with the children and the families about specific needs. The Bantus inability to interact fluently in their daily lives creates feelings of inconsistency and perpetuates feelings of insecurity in their local community. When the community becomes a host and involved in helping refugees there should be a combination of both the Bantu and the Charlottesville community’s ‘local knowledge, values and practice

in order to ensure local relevance and sustainability of programs' (Loughry & Eyber 2003: 53).

4.3.3 Diversity Can Create Divisions

'I went to tell the neighbors of the new Bantu family that they would be getting new neighbors and give them information about the family. Their response was: 'I hope they don't smell and keep the place a mess like that last family'' (Beale, personal interview, 28 July, 2008).

While driving around in the car with Debra she told me this story. Unfortunately proper communication was not made to these neighbors about the difficulties that the new refugees would have in moving into the neighborhood. Instead of helping each other learn from the experience, it seemed to breed racism, biases and discrimination. This has made new families feel unwelcome in the community and affected their participation locally and within the school. Rumors created by neighbors can possibly create stressful situations for other refugees resettling in that neighborhood, or who may come later. This is what we see happening with this story.

This divide is further frustrated by the economic differences in Charlottesville. The Charlottesville community is made up of two classes-upper and lower. The lack of a middle class poses issues for integration both for the parents as well as the children. Local-native born children from Charlottesville hardly mix with the refugee children. This is also true for the parents. Refugee parents seem to be perceived as lower class citizens in comparison to other members of the community. This in part could be because of the lack of middle class in the community. The dynamic difference in income levels causes separation among the community members and thus affects the level of interaction that the refugee adults and children have with other members of the community, affecting the child's perception of their position in society.

4.4 The Somali Bantu Parents

Most of the Somali Bantu parents work at the university. The university is a 24-hour, full-functioning facility which results in odd hours for workers. These work hours influence the parent's ability to participate in their children's lives. When the parents are not working they are trying to adjust themselves to their new surroundings and new life by advancing their skills, such as in English.

4.4.1 Dependency and Communication

'I studied very hard to get my license. It was very hard because my English was not good. Without English or a license it was very difficult to get a job' (Mo*, personal interview, 28 July 2008).

Mo's story is similar to many adults who move to the US in resettlement. Those that have problems adjusting to the English language are distanced from the community. Illiteracy creates a barrier not only for them personally, but for their families and children. This

illiteracy was described to me as creating a dependency on volunteers and sponsors- specifically for this population-Debra. This is especially true for adult females.

Parents are consumed with getting the family settled and finding a job, thus activities that the children participate in such as sports are difficult to invest in. This can further distance the parent from knowing what the child needs in their new setting because they are struggling to figure out what they need in theirs. The differences in needs and understanding of the formal education system (such as signing children up for activities and signing permission slips) have hindered child participation in events and programs.

‘Ambi’s mom was feeling stomach pains so she decided to go to the doctor. She couldn’t drive there because she doesn’t have a license because she is illiterate. She walked the whole way there gripping her stomach. When she got there she could not fill out the insurance forms required because she couldn’t read them. She didn’t know how to explain that to the administration, so she turned around and walked home’ (Debra Beale, personal interview, 28 July 2008).

This story exemplifies the isolation and inability of some refugees to attain basic needs. This not only has adverse affects on the person with the illness but also on the whole family. Adults are needed to sign consent for their children in medical situations. Children sometimes help their parents with this, but Debra has been on several doctor’s visits or taken the responsibility to take the child and act as their guardian in order for them to receive proper treatment.

4.4.2 *Communication Lowers Barriers*

In larger communities such as Atlanta and Chicago there are mutual assistance associations that are made up of refugee groups. However, in this smaller community the refugees must depend on volunteers, community organizations, as well as other refugee populations to help them become adjusted. The Somali Bantu are now helping the Burundi refugees that are resettling because they share knowledge of the Swahili language. I see this as a type of informal assistance association-a creation of their own bridges and networks to attain resources and opportunity

Following the PWG’s framework the ‘place that the family has in humanitarian response depends upon its role in the process of community engagement and recovery’ (Ager 2005: 51). In the case of the Somali Bantu, the family remains the locus of cultural tradition in terms of language and food but from my observation and interaction they do not play a role in the adaptation and acculturation of the children to the community.

Parents and other adults such as Debra are the mediators of the child’s environment. They have the power to give children permission to participate in activities as well as encourage them to persevere in their interests. The community could play a role by helping the parents understand how to give their children the opportunities that other children have.

Many misunderstandings exist between the education system, the children, and the family. One recognizable difference exists when working with children with learning disabilities and mental handicaps. Getting the child, the teacher and the parent on the same level is

important to helping the child succeed. Problems with privacy laws and respect for the individual's rights can and does effect the information that the school and others who are helping these children have access to. If a child continually does poorly and the teacher does not understand, it leads to misunderstandings and frustration. There must be some method where the schools can be made aware, the parents educated on the problems their child may have, and the child receive the services that they need.

4.5 The Somali Bantu Children

The children were spoken to in groups, separated by gender. Fatuma was my translator, helping me understand what some of the girls were having difficulty expressing, and Moses tried to keep the boys on track by streamlining his own answers to encourage participation. The children were spoken to in Debra's house where they all felt comfortable.

4.5.1 *Unspoken But Not Forgotten*

'I remember going from one camp to another, getting on a bus, stopping in a place, walking about, going to another place and then getting on another bus. I remember standing in line to get on the bus and other people-I think they were Somalis and Sudanese-yelling at us that it wasn't fair that we got to go and they didn't' (Fatuma, 13, personal interview, 28 July 2008).

Although the children aged 10-14 have few memories from pre-resettlement, a few can remember certain events like this one that Fatuma recalls from the resettlement process. This story and others like it are consistent with official reports about the process.

'School here is so much better than in refugee camps. If we were late for school a teacher would weave a pen through our fingers, put another one on top and press down. If we did or said something wrong we were punished with a whipping or by being slapped with a ruler' (Awyare*, 12, group discussion, 28 July 2008).

A boy who went to Koran school recalled: 'When I recited part of the Koran wrong I was stripped and beaten in front of my classmates' (Oromo*, 12, group discussion, 28 July 2008).

'I don't understand why students here are so bad. The teachers are so nice' (Unshirey*, 11, group discussion, 28 July 2008).

The children like going to school in Charlottesville. The quotes show the contrast in situations and circumstances in classrooms in refugee camps and in the US. Punishments described can be traumatic, however, the children did not seem to dwell on it and spoke of it as a fleeting memory. When asked if there was anything positive, the girls sang a song they used to sing when the school day was over at Kakuma. When the girls sang this, they all smiled and laughed.

Some memories that the children brought up had the potential to be traumatizing.

'One day at the refugee camp I was helping my dad sell some of the goods that we had grown. He had to step away so I was the only one at the stand. Robbers came

and stole my goods. I was very scared, but when my dad came back he said everything was okay, that I would be safe now' (Fatuma, 13, group discussion, 28 July 2008).

Fatuma told this story to me, but other stories about traumatic experiences I learned of through Debra as the children were playing. Debra told me about a young boy, Abdi*, who had witnessed seven of his family members beheaded. She informed me that he has not had counseling for this and he was very quiet when he first came to the US. Watching him in her house, I would have never guessed that he had witnessed so much at the young age of ten.

I also learned that another child that I was interacting with, Gedi*, is a child created from rape. Debra and other members of the 'refugee household' I was an honorary member of, told me that her family acts differently towards her than other members. Debra informed me that she also suffers from psychological issues; she is chemically imbalanced and has episodes of running away and suicidal threats. However because the parents do not understand this mental illness as an illness she goes untreated, making her even more of an outsider in her own family.

4.5.2 *Bridges Across Worlds*

'In Kenya we used to play soccer whenever we had a chance-at lunch, after school-anytime we could get a group together. Nothing was formal-no coaches or times. Here we also play pick-up games. This summer we've been going to the school around 6 pm and play' (Moses, 13, group discussion, 28 July 2008).

The boys informed me that the children who meet at the school are primarily a variety of refugee children. There is very little mixing with local Charlottesville community children. Discussing soccer with the boys acted as an icebreaker for the children and me. This created a window to speak to them about their lives, their past and their plans for the future.

One of the girls told me about her brother who plays soccer with the high school team. Fatuma said that he also hangs out with his team outside of the school and soccer setting and this has led to him getting a part-time job at a local country club. From my interviews he is the only one mentioned who has friends and participates in activities outside of the refugee community.

4.5.3 *Our Future is Not Our History*

'Math is important for my future-for everything I want to do' (Somali Bantu children, group discussion, 28 July 2008).

When the children were asked what their favorite subject was in school both the girls and the boys all said math. Some children also answered that they liked English or Social Studies in addition. Both the teenage boys and girls said that math was important for their future and the careers they wanted to pursue.

The boys were interested in becoming professional soccer players, firemen, and policemen. The oldest boy said he wanted to transition to a newscaster after being a professional soccer

player. He said he would need math for the statistic side of the job. The boys said that if they could play for any soccer team in the world, it would be America, because they are Americans now. I interpret this as exploring a definition of their personal sense of identity—a point of negotiation in translating themselves in their resettlement lives.

The girls, both young and adolescent largely said that they wanted to be doctors or teachers. When I asked them why, they said because they wanted to help people. These visions for the future were different than what the older children envisioned. With families already started, or on the way, the goal of the young adults was towards making money to support themselves.

4.5.4 Barriers to Opportunities

The children I spoke with pinpointed four main barriers to participating in out of school programs and these were: access, literacy, transportation, and culture.

‘I wanted to participate in math camp over the summer, but when I called them they said they would call me back and they never did. I missed the deadline and I haven’t had anything to do this summer’ (Ambi*, 13, group discussion, 28 July 2008).

Here the barrier was access. If a child is interested and wants to learn more about math, they should be allowed to do this, especially since the government stresses it for their standardized tests and in the NCLB Act. Parental participation and understanding also played a role in this missed opportunity.

Sometimes requirements that seem simple may be more difficult for parents who are struggling with English. Forms that need to be filled out to access programs free of charge require proof of income. When parents cannot read them it results in missed opportunities for the children. Many of the children reported this as a reason for not participating in summer activities.

Moses presented another barrier. He was concerned about his ability to travel for soccer. He and a few of the other boys are reaching the age where competitions are away from Charlottesville. Debra has consistently taken the kids to their after school activities, but she does not have time to take them to places that are farther away. In response, Debra said that she has discussed the possibility of getting help from other community members to enable participation.

A barrier on the cultural side exists, especially for females. Swimming, for example causes issues because of attire. For religious and cultural purposes, swimsuits are inappropriate for females. Sometimes the pool also has rules about what can be worn in the pool. If they cannot go in regular long pants or shirts, some females cannot participate.

The EDGE program is popular with the Somali Bantu because the access guaranteed 1) from it being at school and 2) the free charge. Most of the children participate in sports within the program, but with the variety of activities that the program provides there is room for activities that could allow the students to share where they come from and some of their culture and traditions.

4.5.5 *Outspoken Differences*

'We would get on the bus and people would call us names, and tell us to go back to where we came from' (Nuuria*, 11, group discussion, 28 July 2008).

Both the teenage girls and boys brought up discrimination in school. This discrimination compelled Debra to drive these children to school for a year because the bus ride was painful to endure.

The discrimination does not only exist within the wider Charlottesville community but also within the Somali Bantu community. A feud exists between a family from the Upper Juba River Valley and those from the Lower Juba River Valley. The feud exists mainly between the parents, however the children are affected because they cannot go to each other's house. Both Fatuma and Ambi say that they do not understand the feud but that it does not affect their friendship.

4.5.6 *Cultural Fusion*

Marriage was a topic that children were excited to talk about and a subject through which they described their family and traditions. While doing research I was introduced to an 18-year-old girl, still in high school, who just had her wedding the past weekend. She married her cousin who is 24. The children like weddings because it is a chance for everyone who has resettled around the US to come together and celebrate. The girls wear traditional dress whereas the men wear western clothing, but their dancing style and music is their own. I see this as a place where past and present cultures are merging.

While visiting this house I was also introduced to several other young girls, still in high school, who had already been married and were nursing their children. Until these parents leave the formal school system, family members watch the babies during the day.

There are other traditional aspects that are present in the family and were observed.

The kitchen at Debra's was a bustle. Fatuma and Ambi were peeling potatoes while Gedi cooked the meat. The younger girls watched and tried to help at the stove when the older girls became distracted in conversation. After about an hour of preparation in the kitchen and a mixing of a random selection of spices, meat, rice, and vegetables the girls had prepared dinner and they called the boys to eat. The girls served the boys and they went outside to eat. The girls then served themselves.

I viewed traditional gender roles between the children. As with this simple story of an afternoon treat it is visible that the girls see themselves in a certain role. After the children were done eating the girls cleaned up the mess made from cooking, but the boys did their own dishes. The boys told me that they only clean at Debra's house.

4.5.7 *Does Age Matter?*

Bantus who arrived at an older age have found themselves caught in between the working world and the education system. With the age-out program many have been forced to find other avenues to attain their high school diploma such as General Education Development (GED). The GED, the equivalent of a high school diploma, is invaluable to finding a job. Knowledge of the English language is required to take this test. This is also true for attaining a driver's license, which is essential for daily activities.

Younger children, school-aged children have more access to resources and community help because of the social environment of school. The older children have a more difficult time adjusting because of a lack of education, low levels of English, and family responsibilities. This along with the pressure of finding work makes their experience incomparable to the school-age children who have more time to ease into the community and find their own methods of acculturation. It should be recognized that moving to a new country at a young adult age is just as hard, if not harder because access and connections are more difficult to acquire. A focus on young adults being resettled and the adjustments and compromises they make for integration should be explored further.

4.5.8 *The Future is Ours*

From interviews it was obvious that an interest and focus on the future is important for Bantu children. Their mature outlook on school, and specifically on the impact that math can have on future achievements are a vision of moving past 'ooji'.

The children are in a unique situation because they hold on to their language, which is a large cultural identifier. They speak in Maimai at home, but they interact and learn in English. Struggles with identity are channeled into focus on a great future-high paying, important professions that can make an impact on the lives of others. Earning respect through hard work is evident. Their well-being appears to be measured by personal achievements and future opportunities, which was shown through their excitement over test scores.

The children have a mature outlook on adverse circumstances. For example, the discrimination that the Bantu children receive from peers. Most speak of it as something that is the problem of those that discriminate rather than that of themselves. The children's presence in these multiple communities are more complex and influential than they look on the surface. What has become evident to me through my research and what is shown in this chapter is that the Charlottesville community is more diverse and arguably stronger because of the diversity that continues to increase in part because of the presence of this population.

This chapter described my findings and showed my initial analysis from viewing the four environmental elements that the Bantu refugee child interacts in Charlottesville. Through this analysis I recognized shifts in my initial perceptions of the communities and the way that the child interacts and is part of these communities. These shifts in thought lead the analysis of my findings presented in chapter five.

Chapter 5: Analysis

‘New environments create new opportunities that may at certain times compensate for the losses suffered, as well as open up new spaces for refugees to re-negotiate former cultural and personal thoughts, values, practices and expectations and create something new’ (Lammers 1999: 64).

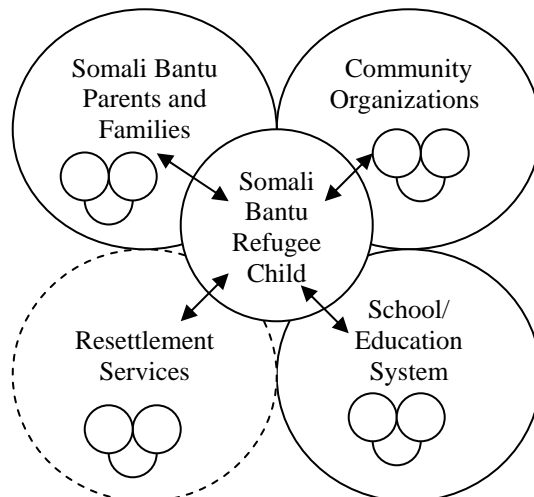
Throughout this research I have discovered shifts in my own thoughts and perceptions. I see three main shifts that became apparent to me as trends surfaced through analysis of my primary findings and field research. I explore these ideas further in this chapter, dealing first with the change in the framework of the social environments. Then I will explore the child’s place in their environment and finally introduce a new way of viewing the Somali Bantu child-as a translator.

5.1 The First Shift: Environmental Views

Before entering into the refugee community my views leaned towards support for the IRC’s commitment to resettlement and the efforts of the extracurricular community. I thought that I would find the school and the education program in need of the most improvement. My ideas were jaded by my personal experience with US public schools, well-versed policy documents and websites about the services that the resettlement agencies provide. Although the education system remains a focus area for improvement, in my opinion, it is also an access point for community members to volunteer.

Because of my perceptions of the IRC and community programs, I organized the environmental elements in three parts placing the resettlement agency (IRC) in the section of community organizations. However, the role that this agency plays is much different than the other community organizations that interact with the Bantu refugees so I separate and place it as a separate environmental element, resettlement services (see figure 2). These four elements: the school, the community organizations, the Somali Bantu parents and families, and the resettlement services influence the trends discussed below.

Figure 2: Updated Organization of the Social Environments of the Somali Bantu Refugee Child In Resettlement (Boothby, et. al., 1995: 10)



The Somali Bantu overwhelmingly depend on Debra. In the small amount of time that I spent with them, I could see that she is an essential element in their lives-both as a connector and as a type of translator between the separate elements in Charlottesville. The problem with dependency on one person is the issue of sustainability.

'I'm getting older. When my kids grew up and moved out I thought that was it. I love having the kids around, but it leaves me very little time, and money. I would like to set up an organization or non-profit within the community-at least to have a place where people can know where to go if they want to volunteer or donate items. Right now they bring things to my house, and I'm not a charity. I'd like to take classes so I can do this, but I just don't have enough time' (Beale, personal interview, 28 July 2008).

Her commitment and care for the refugee families and children is obvious in her want to continue her work, and to involve more community members. She needs help. The IRC's non-connection has caused the formal agency's duties to fall to community hands-informal involvement and engagement. It is the informal help, such as Debra and university student-run programs, that I see building bridges and filling the gaps between the refugee and his/her opportunities within their resettlement community.

The IRC is an important organization and is uniquely positioned within several communities: local, government (federal, local and state), school, and community organizations, however in Charlottesville, they do not use this position for the advantage of their mission. A check on the services that they provide and a restructuring based in communication with the community could have important and beneficial impacts on the organization and encourage it to function better for refugees in the future.

5.2 The Second Shift: Changing Perceptions

Upon review of the resource model introduced in the theoretical framework, I see a problem with my initial perception of communities acting on the child. I believe that rather than viewing the communities/environments as elements that have the power to decide how resources can be used for the refugee children, the children in this community should be made aware of their opportunity to view the communities/environments as resources towards their own development. It is how the child decides to view themselves in their network and their level of agency that impacts how, what, and who they need.

The high school soccer player recognized his network of friends both from school and sport and this provided him with the opportunity to work at a country club in the area. He used his own physical and environmental resources, the skill of playing soccer, to access other resources such as economic. Children should recognize that they are important resources to the development of the community. This is also a matter of how they are introduced to the community and their level of knowledge on what they are entitled to as refugees and as children in general. These opportunities can also increase human capacity, which can help in future pursuits.

Access to resources affects the child's well-being. I see them striving for 'personal growth, independence, meaningful relationships with others, and community service' which is part of

the self-determination theory to achieve a good life (Oishi 2000: 88). Each refugee has his or her own idea, own vision for the 'good life' in the future, whether that is as a soccer player or doctor. The resources they have, and the way in which they view resources in their environment and gain access to them will affect their pursuance of these goals.

As research has shown, recreation activities are supposed to promote inclusiveness between children of diverse cultures and backgrounds thus the process of developing and implementing these programs should develop from the community. Not only should children have a say in what they want to participate in, but also the parents be an essential part of the planning. This way a family's values and beliefs can be taken into consideration from the beginning.

The lack of multicultural education programs inhibits levels of knowledge and awareness of diversity, which leads to misunderstandings through preconceptions. Character education is mentioned in the NCLB Act. Allowing this sort of diversity in the education system might have impacts on the existing separation of refugee students from local students and open up lines of communication between the children, and even their parents. To become part of the local community the elements of the child's ecological network must work together to provide space, access and opportunity.

5.3 Children as Translators

The idea of children as translators began with Moses, who has been helping the Burundi refugees in resettlement by verbally translating written and spoken words. His literal place as a translator in his community led me to re-analyze the idea of translation and the discussions that I had with the children. The four environmental elements revealed children as translators of their environments, for their environments, and for themselves.

5.3.1 Translator for Family

With problems of adult illiteracy and low levels of English, children become interpreters for their family. They translate words on paper and words spoken into a language that their guardians can understand and respond to. Since children are forced to use and learn English more quickly than their adult parents, they become the translators between their new community and their family. This is also seen with understanding the education system and extracurricular activities.

The activities and opportunities that the children participate in are different from what their parents were exposed to. The children in this situation act as translators of new experience for their parents. They are a type of connection between the past and the present.

Past mixing present is evident in traditional gender roles. The male children seem to think it is normal not to cook or clean. The Somali Bantu men practice polygamy but were forced to 'divorce' before resettlement. Before resettlement some girls did not participate in education due to these traditional roles. These roles seem to be played out and yet confused by new expectations set in their community.

This mixing of culture and tradition with the present, new experiences is an everyday reality. It is the combining and understanding of these two worlds and how they fit together that begin to mold their personal identity within it.

5.3.2 Translator for School

Children play the role of liaison between school and family by explaining/translating to administration, staff, and other adults why their parents do not participate in school. These reasons have to do with both work hours and uneasiness with English.

The children are a unique resource and asset for the school. They have the ability to translate the stories that are told in their books into actual experiences. They provide unique perceptions of situations that could offer a further educational dimension to lessons. Of course students should not be put in the position of being the token refugee, but this school is diverse and an appreciation of experiences could help refugees feel more a part of the community. The gap in multicultural education within the school system can be made smaller. Extra money does not necessarily need to be spent, time within the system just needs to be adjusted to allow for exploration.

This experience has the possibility of connecting the children through realizations of similarities rather than differences. These children have also exposed areas that can make the school and the programs that they provide better, such as ESL. The mutual commitment to improvement-children to learning and school to programs-reveals the children as a type of mutual evaluator. The problems they have can be translated into a search for better programs to supplement the standard teaching requirements-this may be why we see a new ESL coordinator entering the system.

5.3.3 Translator for Community

The children are dynamic members of their community. By entering the community they challenge what has been accepted-upper class access and lower class separation. By exposing this divide and revealing discrimination and intolerance that exists within the community, these refugee children can challenge the community to be better.

They bring knowledge, courage and competence of a way that the world has worked for them, and find outlets where similarities can be bridged, such as in sport and music. Given the opportunity to interact on different levels, in different situations offers opportunities for the local children to become translators to the refugee children on how they live in the US and allow for the refugees to interpret that into their own understanding of how to pursue well-being.

‘The children and their families have been so grateful for the help given by (and friendships forged with) UVA. volunteers. From the other side, volunteers constantly tell me how stunned they were to learn so much about different cultures, friendship and perspectives on life from the children’ (Broga, 2007)⁵.

⁵ Direct quote from newspaper article.

The community organizations act as translators to modern technology and future opportunities through mentor activities and skill-building exercises, but the children also offer these mentors a translation. A translation of what they hear and see in news stories and learn in classrooms into a real personal experience. Understanding, communication, and involvement show this mutual need of different perceptions as a resource to a rich life.

5.3.4 Translator for Resettlement Services

Within the element of resettlement services, a child language translator (such as Moses) is receiving help from the resettlement agency, but also acting as a bridge and a translator between the resettlement agency and the new refugees entering. 'Translation is a process of adjusting rhetoric and structure of programs or interventions to local circumstances' (Merry, 2007: 135). With this definition, the children can act as a translator towards government services. For example bringing forward the missing elements that the IRC is not providing for the community. Children should recognize the power that they have and the resources that they are entitled to. Their complaints and acknowledgment could translate into better services and foster communication vertically and laterally.

5.3.5 Translator for Self

The hardships of their past have been translated into hope, commitment and confidence in the future. This is why I believe they do not discuss their past. They translate themselves to be a part of their communities-as Elsa Hoffman described.

It is the idea of assimilation, adaptation and acculturation to one way of life that I feel causes the most issues. The children do not just need one aspect, say the education system, for them to feel part of the community, but all the other environments combined to make their town their home. Sally Merry would describe them as the core of their agency with local webs of meaning being their environments (Merry, 2007: 137). They translate themselves in their new environments to include parts of themselves before, such as sport, with that of their present existence, formal education, to look towards their future, in professions such as newscaster. They translate themselves to become part of their community but also remain recognizable to themselves and their family through language and customs such as dance and music.

There is more to the role of translator than simply language. Translations exist on several levels-in their home, the community, in school, and with each other. They are learners but also educators as 'tensions between positions are part of a continuous process of negotiating ever-changing global and local norms' (Merry, 1007:9).

5.4 Trends Translated into Suggestions

As the main trends surfaced there were a few suggestions in each environmental element. These are:

- 1) Character building through multicultural education programs.

- 2) Increased involvement of the resettlement agency.
- 3) Creation of sustainable community programs.
- 4) Communication to bridge the views and needs of children, community, parents, and education through involvement in planning programs.
- 5) Recognition by children of their environmental elements as resources rather than structures and determinants.

The analysis of my findings in this chapter is summarized by these suggestions. My suggestions and my analysis come from my personal interpretation of my research and the opinions that I had and changed through the process. I encourage further research in this area to make access to opportunities for refugee children easier as well as a closer look at the methods that the different environments use for transitioning both for refugee children and for their families.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research process began with a focus on Somali Bantu children entering resettlement because of their insecure lives. The process of resettlement can be viewed as a vehicle towards human security in the sense of providing for 'hard' safety. It developed into understanding this in broader terms: how the human security of these refugee children is dependent on access to opportunities that can translate into the attainment of personal goals and subjective well-being.

My framework structured my research process, but my research challenged me to view how I was looking at the environmental elements I had identified in my initial design and their impact on the child's well-being. I became victim to viewing the children as receivers of help and assistance, dependent on the resources of others, whilst my theoretical framework was based on the notion of participation and children's own agency. In analysis of my findings I again was brought to recognize the important role that refugees, and refugee children have on their own community as well as the community they are entering. Looking for a way to improve how the child themselves can realize their importance and independence within their social world, both old and new, is a vision that I only became aware of when I stepped back and looked at the complete picture.

The Somali Bantu children have many different cultural and community resources at their disposal. They embody the strength of resiliency, the lack of fear from scarcity, and a community member who will help them become involved. Rather than the impact that the environmental elements have on the child, it is the environmental elements that should be aware of the impact that the child will have on them.

Recognizing the agency that a child has and their influential impact on their environments I have come to recognize children as translators-translators of language, culture, experience, tradition, of new age. They are translators of customs and knowledge. Each child interprets their own understanding of well-being by enlisting their agency through the negotiation of translations of their environmental elements. In the end, 'adults are [only] facilitators of children's learning and development' (Loughry & Eyber 2003: 59).

In the same way that words and their meanings are interpreted, a child him or herself translates their personal interpretation and understanding of well-being which affects the way that he or she interacts in their community and makes choices towards their future. Recognizing their past and translating that part of their reality into their present life, the Bantus are redefining the derogatory term 'ooji'. They are looking at their today, but also at their tomorrow, and the their days to come.

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Appendix 1

Interview Questions for Teachers:

1. What grade do you teach, or what subject do you teach?
2. How long have you been working there or teaching refugee children?
3. Are you involved outside of the classroom?
4. Was any cultural training given to you before refugees entered the classroom? How did this affect the adjustment period, or how do you think this could have helped?
5. What have you seen to be the biggest barrier to refugee children in school?
6. Is there a problem with the mix of Refugees with local students- what is the proportion at the school? In your classroom?
7. What do you need to do your job?
8. What do you think is keeping the children from participating in outside activities?
9. What do you think they need? What is the best way for them to get this?
10. What kind of training did you have? Which resources were you given? (CAL?)
11. How do you view the partnership in the community? —IRC, Volunteer (University), school system, parents, children?
12. NCLB: Have you seen this affect the funding in schools? Have you heard of this affect the funding in schools for programs that could be beneficial?
 - 12a .How has this affected your ability to teach? (benchmarks and required testing)
 - 12b. ORR-IRC- Connection: Impact Grant- is this used in your school?
13. How are Refugees placed into the education system? How is year in school determined? What documents are required when birth certificates (etc) are not available?
14. How do you cope with the difference in school policy and how you think things should happen in the classrooms?
15. What has been your experience/feelings towards instructions/advice/training given? Is it a local domination/state or federal?
16. Are methods that are used in your classroom taken into consideration in other classrooms with other teachers? What would you suggest to prepare future teachers with immigrants in their classrooms?

17. How has a child asked for extra help? Have they explicitly expressed their needs to you?

18. How involved are children in the process? Do you notice exhaustion, waves in encouragement?

Interview Questions for Somali Bantu Children:

1. Grade
2. Age
3. Do you like school?
4. What is your favorite Class/subject? Least Favorite? Why?
5. Do you have a best friend?
6. What do you like to do when you're not in school?
 - 6a. With who?
 - 6b. Do you enjoy/have fun?
7. What do you do on the weekend?
8. What do you do during school holidays—summer vacation?
9. What games do you like?
10. Who do you play with?
11. Who do you enjoy talking to? Who do you talk to the most?
12. Do you remember anything from before you lived in the US?
13. What do you want to be when you grow up?

Interview Questions for Somali Bantu Parents:

1. Where are you originally from?
2. When did you come to the United States?
3. What was the hardest thing about moving to the US?
4. Did your children have access to education in the refugee camps?
5. Do you have Bantu connections in other resettlement towns?
 - 5a. Relatives?
6. Does your child like school?
7. Is there anything you don't like about the school system?
8. Is there anything you don't like about the community?
9. Does your child participate in community activities?
 - 9a. Do you participate in community activities?
10. What is hard about letting them participate? What barriers arise?
11. Have there been activities that your child has wanted to be a part of that they couldn't for cultural, monetary, or time scarcity on your part?
12. Do you think your child is adjusting well to the United States? Why? What are the signs?
13. How was your preparation for resettlement?
14. How have community organizations been helpful to you and your family during this process?

Notes

ⁱ Church World Service, Ethiopian Community Development Council, Episcopal Migration Ministries, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, International Rescue Committee, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, World Relief Corporation, and the State of Iowa the Bureau of Refugee Services.

ⁱⁱ http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_cescr.htm (8/1/08)

ⁱⁱⁱ Activities offered by E.D.G.E include: Aerobics, Beginning Billiards, Board Games, Creative Cooking, Creative Writing, Crochet Circle, Design and Challenge Club, Drama, Girls' Volleyball (6thGrade), History's Mysteries, Italian Language & Culture, Tahitian Dance, and Tennis, Archery, Basketball Club, Beginners' Stretching, DC & Marvel Comics, Card Games Club, Chess, First Lego League, Floor Hockey, Jewelry Making, Laptop Game, Nature Crafts, Paper Crafts from Around the World, Photography, Rollerblading, Running Club, School Newspaper, Scrapbooking, Sign Language for Fun, Sports Card Collecting, Story Mapping, Ultimate Frisbee, and Yu-Gi-Oh Cards